

STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 193

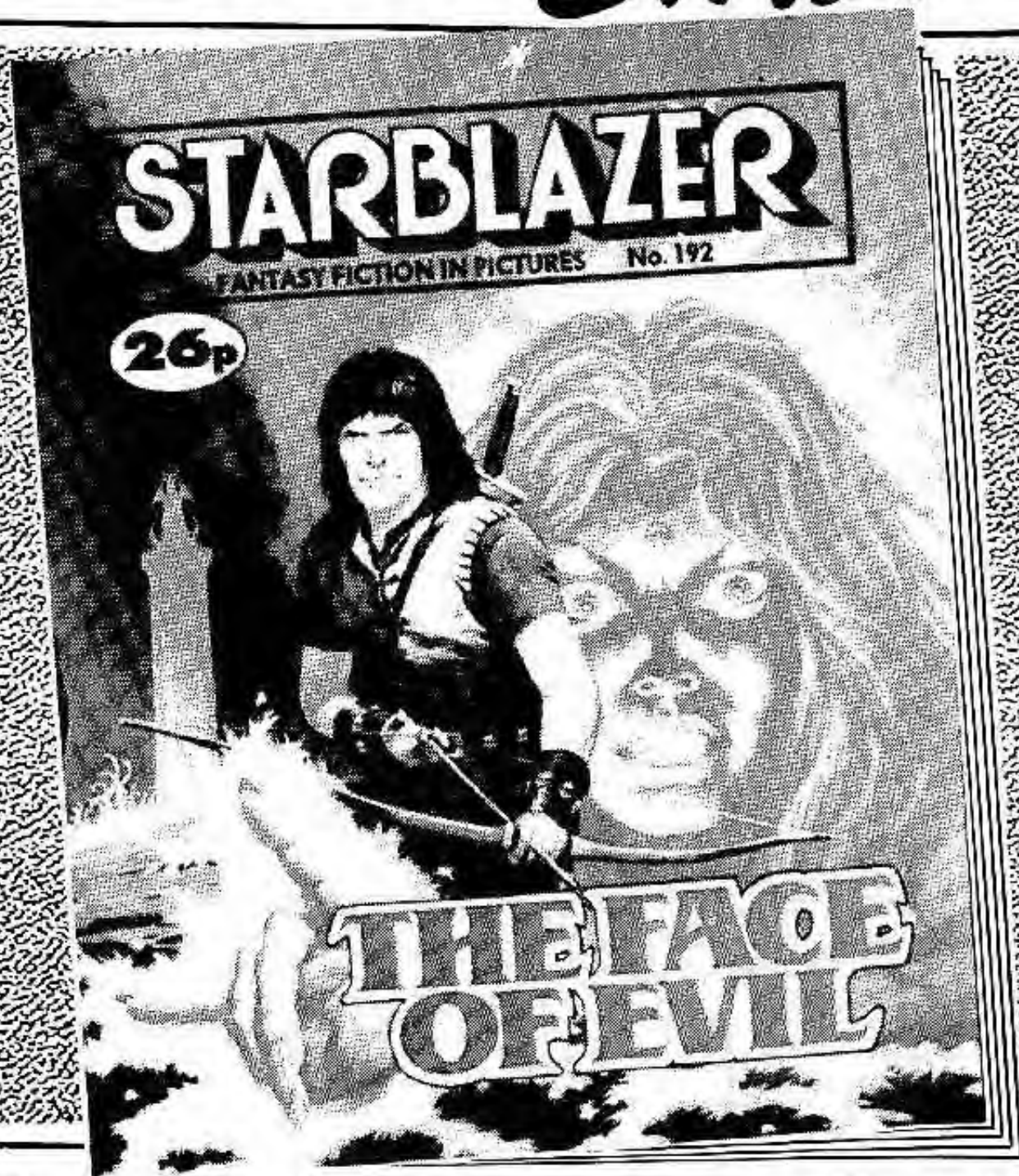
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THE LEGEND
OF THE

**GOLDEN
AXE**



**DON'T FORGET THIS
MONTH'S *OTHER***



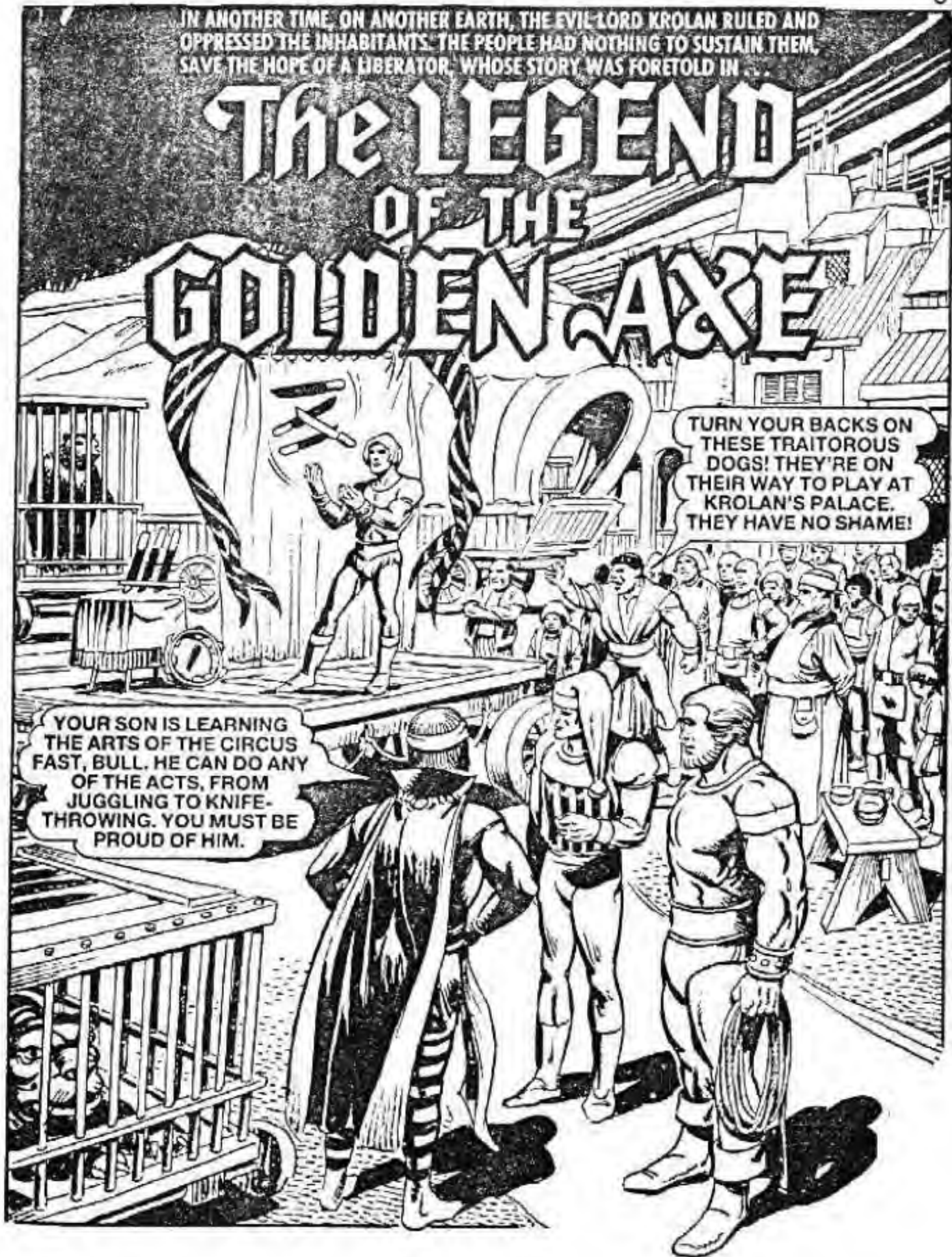
On sale at your newsagent's *NOW!*

IN ANOTHER TIME, ON ANOTHER EARTH, THE EVIL LORD KROLAN RULED AND OPPRESSED THE INHABITANTS. THE PEOPLE HAD NOTHING TO SUSTAIN THEM, SAVE THE HOPE OF A LIBERATOR, WHOSE STORY WAS FORETOLD IN...

The LEGEND OF THE GOLDEN AXE

TURN YOUR BACKS ON THESE TRAITOROUS DOGS! THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY TO PLAY AT KROLAN'S PALACE. THEY HAVE NO SHAME!

YOUR SON IS LEARNING THE ARTS OF THE CIRCUS FAST, BULL. HE CAN DO ANY OF THE ACTS, FROM JUGGLING TO KNIFE-THROWING. YOU MUST BE PROUD OF HIM.



BUT, WHEN MORXAN'S ACT WAS FINISHED —

THEY'RE SPENDING THREE DAYS
WITH KROLAN, HELPING HIM
CELEBRATE YEARS OF
OPPRESSION. THEY'RE FILTH!

I'M NOT TAKING MUCH MORE
OF THIS, KROY. THAT LOUD-
MOUTH HAS BEEN AT ME
SINCE WE ARRIVED.

BITE IT BACK, MORXAN LAD. WE
PLAYERS HAVE NOTHING TO DO
WITH POLITICS. YOU KNOW HOW
YOUR FATHER FEELS. ANYONE WHO
GETS INVOLVED HAS TO ANSWER
TO HIM AND HE'S NOT KNOWN AS
THE 'BULL' FOR NOTHING!

IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE
NEUTRAL THAT THE
ZAHNET SOLDIERS LEAVE
US ALONE, LAD. WE'RE
FREE TO TRAVEL THE
COUNTRY UNMOLESTED,
AND —

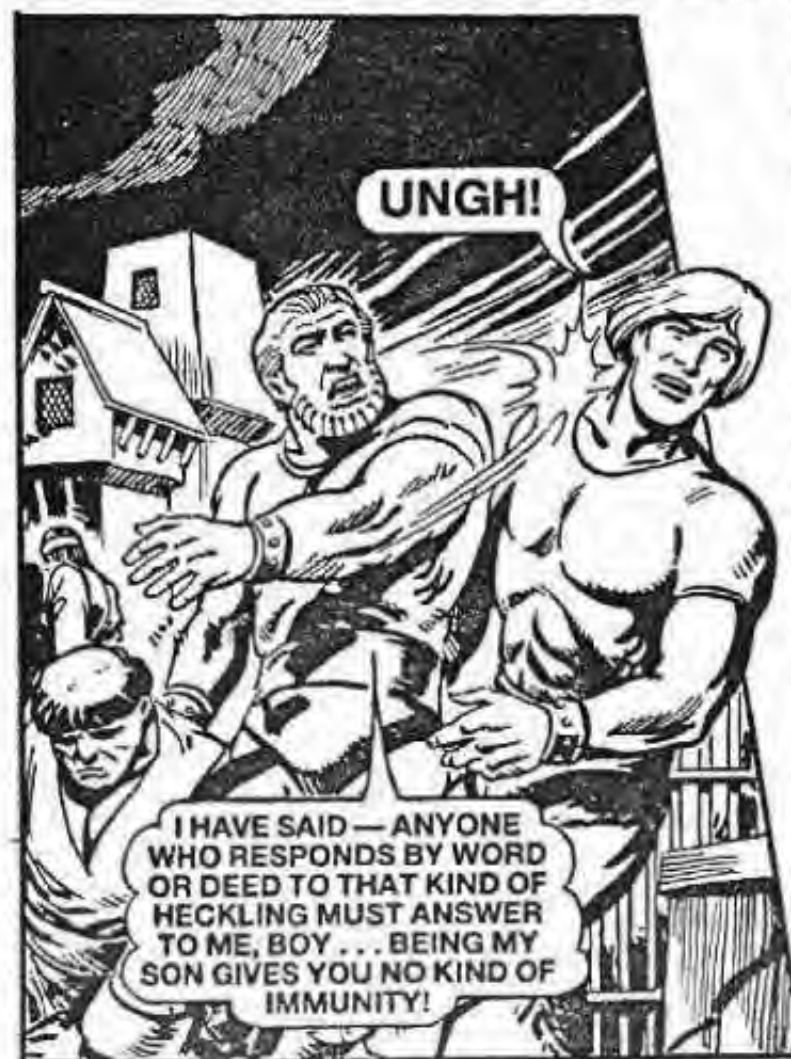
WE SHOULDN'T BE
WATCHING THESE PIGS
— WE SHOULD BE
DRIVING THEM OUT OF
EVERY VILLAGE!

THAT DOES IT! I'LL
SWALLOW NO MORE OF
THIS!









LATER —



THAT NIGHT, WHEN THE PLAYERS' CARAVAN CAME TO REST —



AS MORXAN MOVED AWAY, HE FAILED TO NOTICE THE ROPE ON THE CAGE DOOR. IT HAD BECOME LOOSENED DURING THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN AFRIT AND THE HECKLER...



AND LATER —



MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY, THE LIFE OF A ZAHNET SOLDIER WAS COMING TO AN END...

YOU BLOATED ZAHNET LIZARD DIE!

NOW TO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US... HAVING DESPATCHED A ZAHNET COMMANDER AND A SCORE OF KROLAN'S CURS, THEY'LL BE REDOUBLING THEIR EFFORTS TO TAKE ME — AND I'M A LONG, LONG WAY FROM HOME!

A LITTLE LATER —

IN THE NAME OF SHEOL! WHAT AWFUL CREATURE IS THIS?

AT THE PLAYERS' ENCAMPMENT, OLAN WAS CHECKING THE CAGES BEFORE SLEEPING.

POWERS OF LIGHT! AFRIT!
HE'S LOOSE! ALERT, EVERYONE!

BY AHRIMAN! AND THE
BRUTE'S UNTAMABLE!

ANY OTHER MAN BUT BORGIL THE NIRAQI
WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD BY NOW ...

I MUST DEAL WITH THIS
CREATURE — AND QUICKLY!



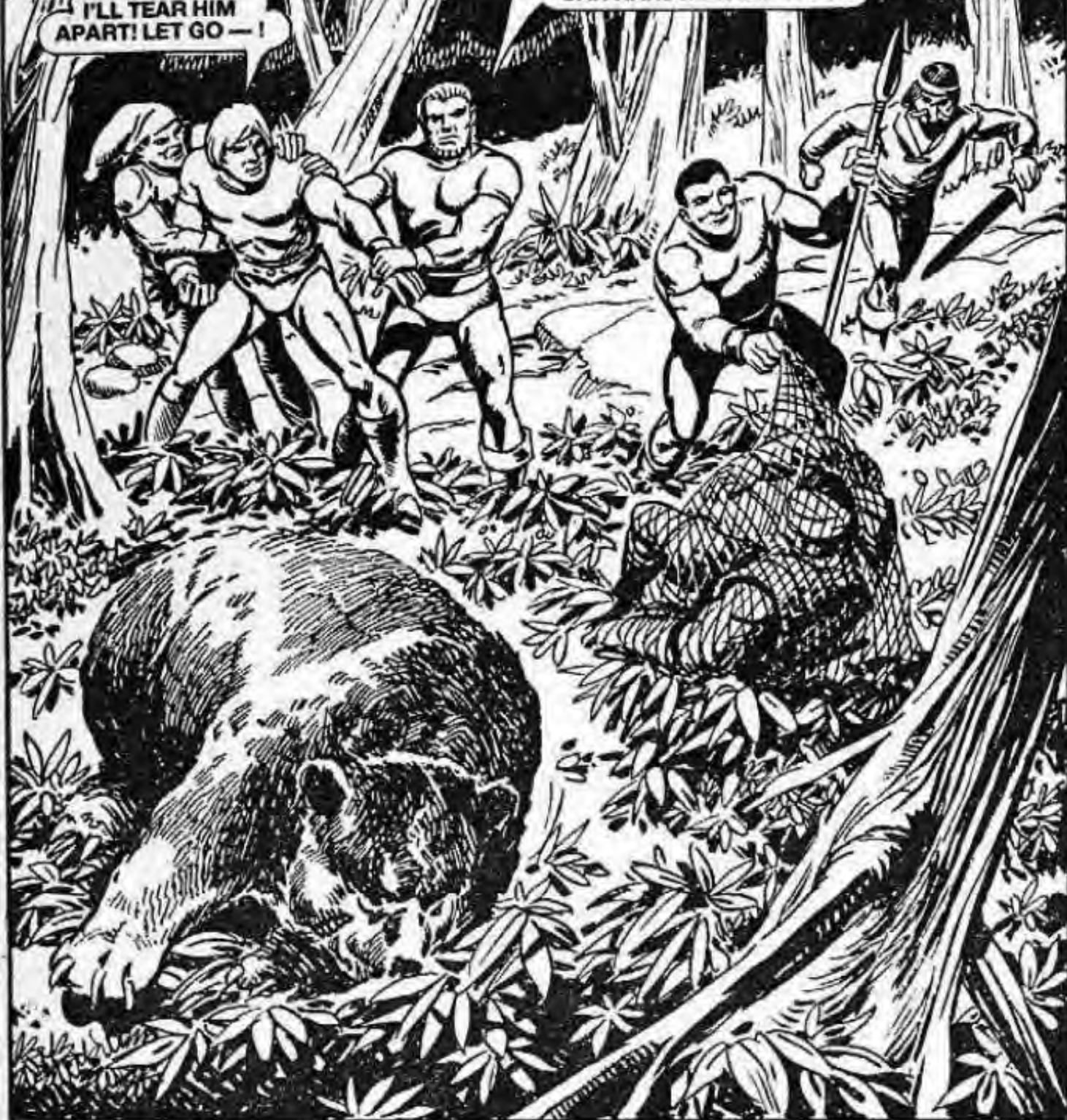


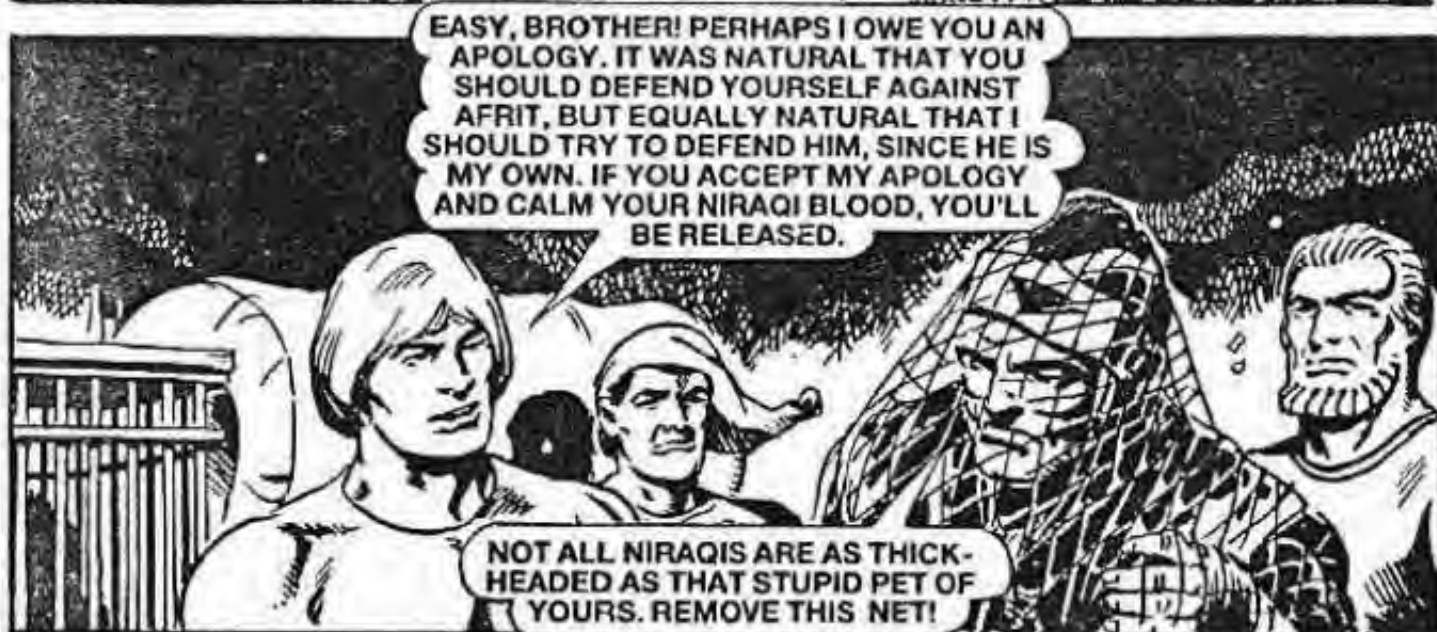
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BUT MORXAN WAS PREVENTED
FROM ATTACKING THE NIRAQI.

I'LL TEAR HIM
APART! LET GO — !

CALM YOURSELF. ONLY YOU CAN HANDLE
AFRIT — GET HIM BACK TO THE CAGE. WE
CAN HANDLE THE NIRAQI.





AS HE ATE AND DRANK WITH THEM, THE HUGE NIRAQI'S HEARTY LAUGHTER AND GOOD HUMOUR WON THEM OVER.

YOU'RE GOOD AND REFRESHING COMPANY, BROTHER. IT'LL BE A PITY TO LOSE YOU. MUST YOU MOVE ON?

AYE, UNLESS YOU HAVE ROOM FOR ANOTHER PLAYER IN YOUR COMPANY.

HOLD HARD, LAD. WHAT HAS THIS MAN TO OFFER? WE CAN'T AFFORD TO CARRY PASSENGERS.

BY WAY OF ANSWER, BORGIL SNATCHED UP ONE OF THEIR SWORDS —

BY TELLUS! I NEVER SAW THE SWORD MOVE!

THAT SWORD IS LIKE A RAZOR! HAD HE NOT CAUGHT THE HILT AFTER THAT FORWARD ROLL HE'D HAVE SLICED HIS HAND OFF!

BORGIL WAS WELCOMED INTO THE GROUP. THE FOLLOWING DAY, AS THEY MOVED ON...

OUR NEXT STOP IS KROLAN'S PALACE. WOULD IT BE AS WELL FOR YOU TO BECOME "THE MASKED SWORDSMAN", PERHAPS?

YOUR SHARP EYES SEE MORE THAN I'D THOUGHT, LAD. WHAT TELLS YOU THAT I NEED TO HIDE FROM KROLAN'S EYES?

SOMEONE SO SKILLED WITH A SWORD WOULD NOT BE WITHOUT ONE, UNLESS IT HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM HIM. THE ONLY WAY IT COULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN WAS IF HE WAS HUGE OUT-NUMBERED. IN TARSILIA ONLY THE ZAHNETS MAY MOVE IN LARGE NUMBERS... I'D SUM UP BY SUGGESTING YOU ARE ON THE RUN FROM KROLAN!

I MUST FASHION A MASK, BROTHER...

THERE IT IS, LAD — THE GRAND DWELLING IN WHICH THE DICTATOR FEEDS LIKE A PIG OFF THE FAT OF THE LAND. AND LOOK AROUND YOU AT THE WAY THE ORDINARY PEOPLE LIVE. DOESN'T IT EVER TROUBLE YOU?

I'M A PLAYER, BORGIL. WE DON'T GET INVOLVED...



WHEN THEY REACHED KROLAN'S STRONGHOLD —

WELL, THREE DAYS OF SOME DECENT ENTERTAINMENT FOR A CHANGE. I WAS GETTING A LITTLE SICK OF THE BLOOD SPORTS AND KILLINGS WHICH NORMALLY AMUSE OUR RULER, RATHIK.

WATCH YOUR TONGUE! STRONG MEN HAVE STRONG TASTES, ELDON. AND KROLAN IS A STRONG, STRONG MAN.

AS RATHIK, KROLAN'S CHAMBERLAIN, MOVED AWAY TO NOTIFY KROLAN OF THE PLAYERS' ARRIVAL —

YOU AND YOUR SON CAN UNLOAD THE PROPS, BULL! WE'LL HANDLE THE PERSONAL EFFECTS...

BULL!

IN KROLAN'S CHAMBERS —



WELL? SO THE PLAYERS HAVE ARRIVED ... SOMETHING IS TROUBLING YOU. IS ONE OF THEM DISEASED? DO THEY CARRY PLAGUE? OUT WITH IT, RATHIK!

YOU RECALL THE OLD LEGEND, KROLAN? THE ONE ABOUT THE GOLDEN AXE — "THE ONE BORN OF THE BULL WILL PROVE THE DOWNFALL OF THE RAVEN ..."

IN ANCIENT TARSILIAN TONGUE, 'KROLAN' MEANS 'RAVEN' ...

YOU AMUSE ME, RATHIK. AM I TO BE DEFEATED BY SOME ANIMAL. WHY TROUBLE ME WITH SUCH CLAP-TRAP?



THAT MAN DOWN THERE IS KNOWN AS 'THE BULL', AND THAT LAD IS HIS SON! YOU HAVE WELCOMED THEM BOTH INTO YOUR CASTLE ...

YOU THINK THAT YOUNG WHELP CAN BRING ABOUT MY DOWNFALL? YOU SHOULD JOIN THESE PLAYERS, RATHIK — YOU'D MAKE A FINE JESTER!





THE GROUP OF PLAYERS PUT ON A FINE DISPLAY OF ACTS ...



IN FACT, SIRE — WOULD IT NOT BE AN IDEA TO SEE JUST HOW GOOD HE REALLY IS? PERHAPS HE WOULD MAKE A GOOD MATCH WITH YOUR OWN CHAMPION?

ONE LOOK AT THAT LAD'S BARE BACK WILL SETTLE THIS MATTER. KROLAN MAY LAUGH AT THE ANCIENT LEGEND, BUT NOT !!

STOP! THE LAD IS TOO GOOD FOR SUCH CLOWNING. LET'S SEE HOW HE CAN HANDLE MY OWN MAN — IN SOME REAL WRESTLING!

IN THE NAME OF ... NO, MORXAN. LET ME TAKE THIS ONE ...

STILL YOUR TONGUE, BORGIL. THIS IS MY CHALLENGE ...

NOW WE SHALL SEE THE TRUTH OF IT, KROLAN. SOONER OR LATER THE LAD WILL HAVE TO SHOW US HIS BACK.

WHAT ARE YOU DRIVELLING ON ABOUT NOW, YOU FOOL? SHUT UP AND WATCH THE FIGHT ...



THEN, AS MORXAN TURNED HIS BACK —

THE AXE! NOW, SIRE —
DOES THAT NOT CONVINCE YOU?

BY TELLUS! THE BIRTHMARK OF THE
DOUBLE-BLADED AXE...! THE
LEGEND ENDS... "AND YE SHALL KNOW
THE CHILD OF THE BULL BY THE DOUBLE-BLADED AXE..."



KROLAN TURNED DEATHLY PALE. THEN —

ENOUGH! CLEAR UP THIS MESS AND
GET TO YOUR QUARTERS... WE — WE
SHALL HAVE MORE OF YOUR FOOLERY
TOMORROW...



AS THEY WERE GATHERING THEIR PROPS —

WHY DID KROLAN STOP THE FIGHT
... BECAUSE I WAS WINNING?

FOOD AND DRINK FOR OUR GUESTS
BEFORE THEY RETIRE!

NO! KROLAN WOULDN'T STOP A FIGHT
FOR THAT REASON ... HE ENJOYS
BLOOD TOO MUCH. THERE'S
SOMETHING SERIOUSLY WRONG AND I
DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS.

BORGIL AND THE REST STARTED
TO EAT AND DRINK. THEN —

A TOAST TO THE HARD-
WORKING MINSTRELS!
THEY SUPPORTED US
WELL!

AS ALL EYES TURNED TO THE
UPPER GALLERY —

WHAT?

DRINK NO MORE, LAD!
I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.

A LITTLE LATER —

... DRUGGED! BUT — WE MUST WARN FATHER AND THE REST, AND —

I TOLD YOU I'M NOT SURE! YOU AND I MAY HAVE SWALLOWED TOO MUCH, BUT IT'S UP TO US TO TRY AND STAY AWAKE IN CASE OF TREACHERY. BUT LET'S HOPE I'M WRONG, LAD ...



IN KROLAN'S CHAMBERS —

THIS LEGEND IS WORRYING, RATHIK ... WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

ALL IS IN HAND, SIRE. THEY DRANK TOO MUCH, KNOCKED OVER A LAMP IN THAT STRAW-FILLED BARN AND BURNED THEMSELVES TO DEATH WHILE WE SLEPT ... A SAD AND TRAGIC ACCIDENT.




YOU THINK OF EVERYTHING, MY DEAR RATHIK! I TRUST THEY'LL ALL BE DEAD BEFORE THE 'ACCIDENTAL' FIRE STARTS?

I HAVE INSTRUCTED THE SOLDIERS TO KILL THEM ALL BEFORE SETTING LIGHT TO THE BARN. THE DRUG WAS STRONG. THEY SLEEP DEEPLY ...




INSIDE THE BARN —



S-STAY AWAKE, BLAST YOU, LAD ... KEEP MOVING! WE — WE MUST REMAIN ALERT ...


N-NO USE ... CAN'T HOLD MY EYES OPEN ANY LONGER ... TOOK — TOOK TOO MUCH WINE ...



MORGAN FELL INTO A CONFUSED SLEEP. BATTLING AGAINST UNCONSCIOUSNESS, BORGIL DRAGGED HIM ACROSS THE BARN.

OUT OF SIGHT ... BEHIND DOORS ... GIVE US A SLIGHT CHANCE ... HIDDEN WHEN THE DOORS ARE OPENED ...

BORGIL DRAGGED MORGAN INTO THE CORNER. THEN—

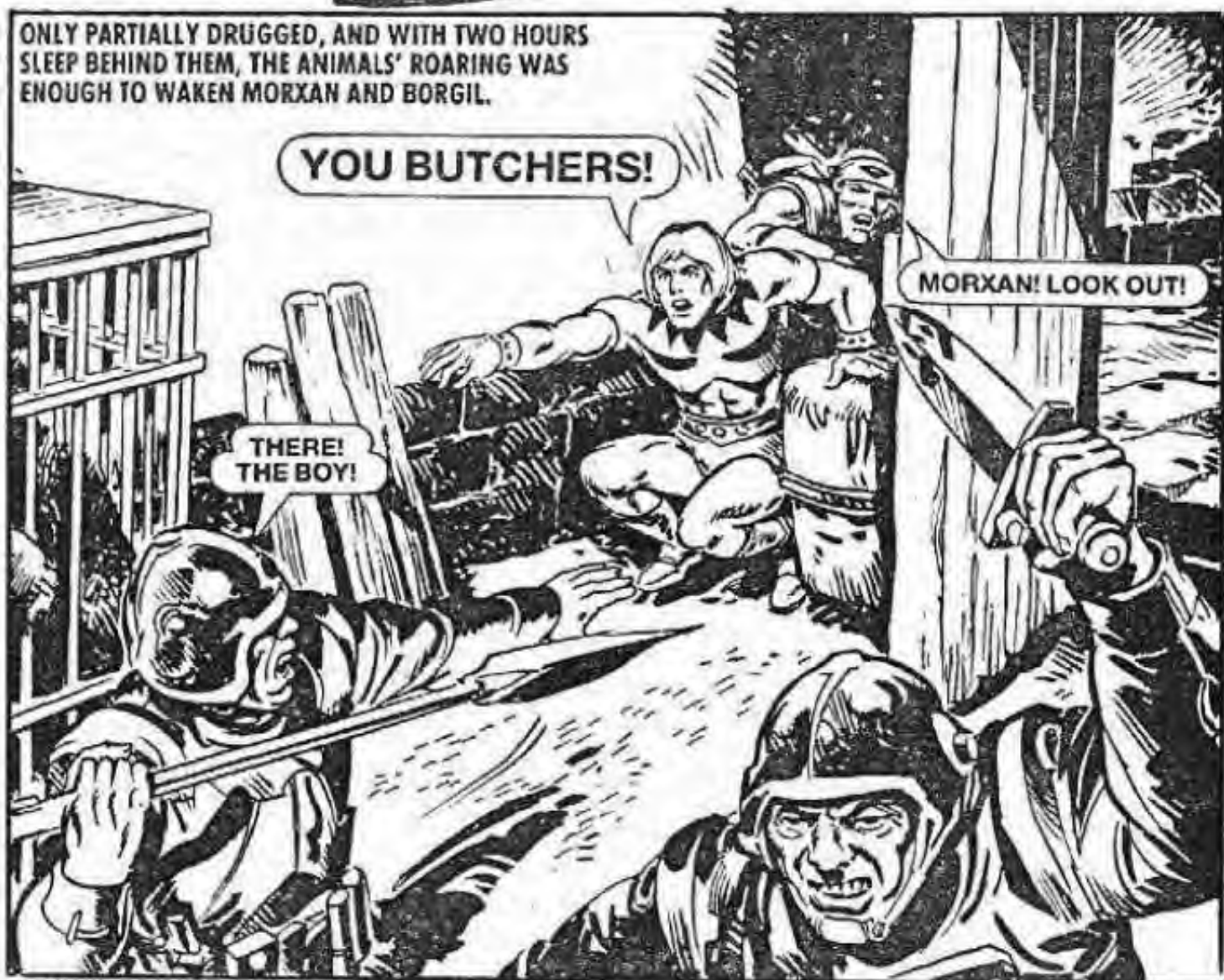


NO GOOD ... MUST SLEEP. DRUG TOO STRONG ...





ONLY PARTIALLY DRUGGED, AND WITH TWO HOURS
SLEEP BEHIND THEM, THE ANIMALS' ROARING WAS
ENOUGH TO WAKEN MORXAN AND BORGIL.



AT THAT MOMENT, THE ENRAGED AFRIT BURST FROM HIS
CAGE — THE THREAT TO MORXAN LENDING HIM
TERRIBLE STRENGTH!

NO!

WITHIN SECONDS, MORXAN AND BORGIL HAD TORN
SWORDS FROM THE KILLERS, AND —

YOU'LL PAY FOR MY FATHER'S DEATH
TENFOLD — A HUNDREDFOLD, YOU
CARRION!





HIS LUST FOR VENGEANCE SATIATED, MORXAN'S GRIEF FLOODED BACK.

MY FATHER! HE CANNOT END LIKE THIS — I MUST TAKE HIS BODY —

YOU MANIAC! YOU'LL ROAST WITH THE REST! COME!

NOOO! COME BACK!

BUT, MORXAN WAS BLIND WITH GRIEF AND RAGE. BORGIL COULD DO ONLY ONE THING.

THOOOW!

SORRY, LAD — BUT TWO OF US MUST SURVIVE THIS INFERNO!

FROM HIS CHAMBERS ABOVE —

A FINE BLAZE, RATHIK. BUT WE
MUSTN'T LET IT GET OUT OF HAND.
TIME TO MAKE SOME ATTEMPT TO
CONTAIN IT ...

ORDERS HAVE BEEN ISSUED, KROLAN.
WATER WILL BE FETCHED FROM THE
MOAT ONCE THE MAIN GATES HAVE BEEN
OPENED ...

AT THE REAR OF THE BARN —

WE'RE GOING TO NEED ONE OF
THOSE SCARED HORSES ... AT
LEAST IT'LL BE EAGER TO GET
AWAY FROM THIS BLAZE. FEAR
WILL LEND THE BRUTE WINGS ...





BORGIL URGED THE ALREADY TERRIFIED HORSE STRAIGHT AT THE GATES.





KNOWING HIS PURSUERS WOULD NOT BE FAR BEHIND, BORGIL URGED THE HORSE TO GREATER SPEED.

GET HORSES! AFTER THEM! BRING THEM BACK OR I'LL TAKE THE LIVING FLESH OFF YOUR BONES! THEY MUST NOT LIVE!

I CHOSE YOU FOR YOUR SPEED, BEAUTY, SO PROVE IT! WE NEED TIME AND DISTANCE BETWEEN US AND THEM, AND THIS LAD NEEDS HELP — I CAN SMELL BURNED FLESH!



FOR TEN MINUTES THEY RODE HARD. BORGIL KNEW HE COULDN'T PUSH THE HORSE ANY FURTHER AND HE WAS ANXIOUS ABOUT MORXAN. IN THE SHELTER OF A STAND OF TREES HE STOPPED.



THAT RIGHT HAND IS BADLY BURNED ... HE'LL BE LUCKY IF HE CAN USE IT PROPERLY AGAIN. BEFORE I SEEK HELP FOR HIM, I MUST LOSE OUR PURSUERS.

BORGIL PREPARED A RAFT —



IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, THE ADDLED OLD SAGE, DREWHAN, STAYS BY THE RIVER ... SO HERE GOES.

THE WATER'S COLD, BUT IT WON'T DO EITHER OF US ANY HARM ... AND WE'LL LEAVE NO TELL-TALE TRACKS ...



BORGIL WAS RIGHT. THEIR PURSUERS
FOLLOWED THE TRACKS LEFT BY THE HORSE. IT
WAS WELL AFTER DAWN BEFORE THEY
CAUGHT UP.

WE'VE BEEN TRICKED! BUT
WE CANNOT GO BACK
WITHOUT THEM. KROLAN
WOULD KILL US ALL —
SLOWLY! WE MUST KEEP
SEARCHING.

THE CURRENT SHOULD
TAKE US AWAY QUICKLY,
AND THE HORSE WILL FOOL
THEM.



AND, SOME HOURS LATER —

NOT BACK! THAT MEANS THEY ARE STILL FREE! AND THE LONGER THEY ARE FREE, THE HARDER IT WILL BE TO FIND THEM ...

PUT THE ENTIRE MATTER INTO THE HANDS OF SOLSORT. YOU PAY HIM WELL FOR HIS SORCERY — LET HIM EARN HIS PAY FOR ONCE.

BORGIL HAD REMEMBERED CORRECTLY —

SOMETHING TOLD ME I'D HAVE A VISITOR TODAY, MY OLD FRIEND, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW IT WOULD BE YOU, MY WILD-BLOODED NIRAQI ...

IF YOU WEREN'T AS HIGH AS A HAWK FROM YOUR HERB-FUMES, DREWHAN, YOU'D HAVE SEEN IT ALL ... YOU WASTE YOUR SKILLS AND DESTROY YOUR POWERS! THIS LAD NEEDS HELP — HE IS BADLY HURT AND FEVERISH FROM HIS INJURIES ...



THE FURIOUS BORGIL WASTED NO TIME.

EEEARGH! GNNNGH! SPLUTTER!
ENOUGH! ENOUGH!

THIS ICY WATER SHOULD
CLEAR YOUR ADDLED BRAIN!
NOW TREAT THE LAD ... IF HE
DIES OR LOSES THAT HAND, I'LL
REMOVE YOUR PICKLED
HEAD ...



LATER —

IT IS BAD, BORGIL . . . VERY BAD . . . EVEN I CANNOT WORK SUCH A MIRACLE . . . BUT I SHALL TRY ALL I KNOW. HELP ME STRIP THE SHIRT FROM HIM. PERHAPS STIMULATION OF THE VITAL FLUIDS WHICH SLEEP IN THE SPINAL COLUMN, AND —

JUST WORK ON HIM!

WHEN MORXAN WAS TURNED ONTO HIS FRONT —

THE MARK!

AYE . . .

THE MARK OF THE LEADER . . . THE MARK OF DESTINY AND BLOOD . . . HE IS THE ONE, BORGIL — HE IS THE ONE! THE LEGEND OF THE GOLDEN AXE HAS COME TO BE.

SO THAT'S WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT! KROLAN MUST HAVE KNOWN . . .

THE LEGEND IS TRUE! NOW I MAY FULFIL MY ROLE . . . I HAVE BEEN THE GUARDIAN OF THE DOUBLE-BLADE FOR FAR TOO LONG. AT LAST I AM RELIEVED OF THE HEAVY BURDEN . . . HELP HIM TO HIS FEET, BORGIL . . .

PUZZLED, BORGIL RAISED THE DELIRIOUS MORXAN TO HIS FEET. DREWHAN SWEEPED THE RUBBISH FROM THE TOP OF AN OLD CHEST. HE RAISED THE LID, AND THEN —

WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT NOW, YOU ANCIENT ADDLE-PATE?

HE MUST TAKE THIS IN HIS HANDS — NOW!

BUT SOME OF THE OLD DREWHAN HAD RETURNED. HE HAD COMMAND IN HIS VOICE. HIS STRENGTH OF WILL BECAME IRRESISTIBLE —

ARRRRRRGH! NOOOO!
MY HAND!

STOP, YOU LUNATIC!

AS THE SCREAMING MORXAN CLOSED HIS TORTURED HAND AROUND THE AXE-HANDLE, AN AMAZING CHANGE TOOK PLACE.

STRENGTH ... POWER ... THE
STRENGTH AND POWER OF YOUR
DESTINY, MORXAN ... YOU ARE
THE ONE. YOU ARE THE
LEADER ...

HIS HAND! THE
AXE ... IT GLOWS!



IN THE DEEP STONE CELLARS BENEATH KROLAN'S PALACE —

SO THE OLD DREWHAN FINDS NEW LIFE... I MUST WATCH HIM CLOSELY AGAIN... WE MUST YET CROSS SWORDS — AGAIN!

NEVER MIND YOUR OLD RIVALRY, SOLSORT! NOW WHAT DO I DO? HE HAS THE AXE! UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING, MY DAYS ARE NUMBERED. YOU'RE THE BEST THERE IS — DESTROY HIM — REMOVE HIM! WHAT, IN THE NAME OF AHRIMAN AND ALL HIS IMPS AM I PAYING YOU FOR?



PERHAPS CHANGING THE COURSE OF DESTINY IS BEYOND EVEN THE TERRIFYING SOLSORT.

I HAVE FOUND HIM. I CAN FOLLOW HIM, BUT DESTROYING HIM IS YOUR JOB, KROLAN. ONLY YOU CAN ALTER WHAT IS WRITTEN! ONLY YOU MAY KILL HIM...



I SHALL ALERT A COMPANY OF ELITE LIZARD TROOPS. THEY CAN GO DIRECTLY TO DREWHAN'S CAVE...

IF ANYTHING CHANGES — IF THEY SET A FOOT OUT OF THAT AREA — I WANT TO BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY.



AT DREWCHAN'S CAVE —

MY WHOLE BEING IS CHARGED, BORGIL. NOW . . . NOW MAY I WREAK VENGEANCE ON KROLAN. HE AND HIS RUNNING DOGS WILL PAY DEARLY FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE . . .

ONE TOUCH OF THAT AXE AND YOUR HAND IS UNMARKED! AND YOU ARE CHANGED FROM A PLAYER INTO A WARRIOR!

AND I TOO FEEL REVIVED, MY FRIENDS. YOU MAY BE NEEDING ME IF KROLAN IS USING SOLSORT TO —



SOLSORT! THAT ALL-SEEING SNAKE COULD PIN-POINT WHERE WE ARE IN MOMENTS! MAKE SURE! AND JUST WHAT IS THIS AXE CAPABLE OF? DO YOU KNOW!?

WE MUST GET AWAY FROM HERE — MOVE TO THE HILLS AND ORGANISE THE REBELS HIDING THERE. I WOULDN'T FANCY TAKING ON KROLAN'S MEN WITH JUST THAT AXE . . .



N . . . NO! I KNOW NOT! THE BLADE ALONE HAS POWER, FOR I RECEIVED THE AXE WITH A BROKEN HANDLE — YET IT STILL GLOWS.



AND DREWHAN ATTEMPTED TO COUNTER.


YES . . . SOLSORT CREATES
A MIST . . . I MUST DISPEL IT!
BUT WHAT IS BEST? I MUST
NOT DITHER . . . WORK, YOU
UNRULY MIND, WORK!

THE POWERS CLASHED —

IN THE NAME OF —!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?

SOME KIND OF FREAK
STORM! THE HORSE IS GOING
CRAZY!

HOLD HIM, BORGIL — HOLD HIM,
MAN! HE COULD CARRY US TO OUR
DEATHS!



EXCELLENT, YOU OLD
FOOL, DREWHAN!
EXCELLENT! A RAIN STORM
TO DISPEL MY MIST! BUT
YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR . . .

OOOOOF!

ARRRGH!



NOT FAR AWAY —

AND IT WAS NO ANIMAL. LET'S TAKE A LOOK. IT COULD BE THEM!

OVER THERE!
A CRY!



**BORGIL! I MUST FIND
HIM...**

ONCE AGAIN, THE HUGE AXE BEGAN TO GLOW, BUT ITS
LIGHT MERELY REFLECTED BACK OFF THE THICK MIST.
SUDDENLY —

I'M FALLING!

MORXAN SLAMMED THE DOUBLE-HEADED AXE AT THE ROCK-FACE—

IT HOLDS!

BORGILI!
HE'S ALIVE!

OOOH!



BUT, AS MORXAN STRUGGLED WITH BORGIL'S DEAD WEIGHT.



AT SOLSORT'S INNER SANCTUM—

GOOD TO HAVE YOU
BACK IN THE FIGHT,
BORGIL...

I DIDN'T THINK I WAS
NEEDED, LAD. WHAT WITH
THAT AXE AND THE MIST
CONFUSING THEM, YOU
HAD IT ALL YOUR OWN WAY!

AYE... MY MIST WORKED
AGAINST ME. I MUST DISPEL IT!
THIS TASK SHALL BE DIFFICULT.

WE'LL TAKE TWO OF THEIR
MOUNTS, BORGIL. THAT OLD
HACK OF DREWHAN'S WOULDN'T
LAST US LONG...

AND WE'VE A FAIR WAY TO GO
BEFORE WE REACH THE REBELS
IN THE HILLS, LAD. LET'S GET
STARTED. THAT MIST IS
CLEARING AT LAST!



AT KROLAN'S PALACE—

SOLSORT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO HALT THEM, SIRE. IT SEEMS THEY HEAD FOR STARGIA GORGE AND THE HILLS BEYOND.

IT IS TIME FOR YOUR PERSONAL TROOPS, KROLAN. ALL OF THEM!

AND I SHALL HEAD THEM! GO TELL SOLSORT I AM DEPENDING ON HIS HELP. IF I HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE I'LL HAVE HIS HEAD ON A POLE!

SOME HOURS LATER—

STARGIA GORGE, LAD ... AND A PERFECT PLACE FOR AN AMBUSH BY KROLAN'S MEN. WHY DON'T WE TAKE THE OLD MINE-SHAFT TUNNEL I TOLD YOU ABOUT?

BECAUSE IT MEANS LEAVING THE HORSES. IT COULD ADD HOURS TO OUR JOURNEY. WE MUST TRUST THAT KROLAN'S TROOPS WON'T HAVE REACHED THE GORGE IN TIME ... EVEN WITH SOLSORT HELPING HIM!



BUT SOLSORT HAD NOT FAILED—

SO HE IS OVER YONDER.
EVEN WITH THAT AXE OF
HIS, HE'LL NOT BEAT ALL OF
US — WE ARE FAR TOO
MANY. MOVE!



MEANWHILE, DREWHAN FELT HIS POWERS RETURNING—

MY HEAD IS CLEARER NOW ...
AND I HAVE A DESTINY TO
FULFIL ... NOW — A HEAT-
SPHERE — I COULD DO IT WITH
MY EYES SHUT AT ONE TIME ...
I'M SURE I CAN REMEMBER HOW
IT GOES ...



DREWHAND'S SKILLS PRODUCED THE DESIRED EFFECT. A GIGANTIC FIREBALL MELTED SNOW AND THE MELTWATER CASCADED DOWN.

BACK—THE REST OF YOU BACK!!

FURTHER ALONG THE GORGE SOME OF KROLAN'S MEN HAD CAUGHT UP WITH BORGIL AND MORXAN.

WHAT IN THE NAME OF AHRIMAN IS HAPPENING BACK THERE?

'TIS A FLOOD! IT HAS STOPPED US PASSING THROUGH THE GORGE — WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE THAT TUNNEL AFTER ALL!

AT SOLSORT'S INNER SANCTUM—



GOOD . . . GOOD! NOW, LET'S SEE HOW YOU HANDLE MY VERY SPECIAL PETS. IT'S MANY YEARS SINCE I CONJURED THESE FROM VULTURE MEAT AND CIMMERIAN POWER!



I'VE NEVER KNOWN DARKNESS LIKE THIS. I CAN'T SEE A HAND BEFORE ME . . .

YES! IT'S ABOUT TIME THIS AXE OF MINE STARTED GLOWING AGAIN. WE COULD USE IT!

THE AXE BEGAN TO EMIT LIGHT, BUT IT WAS ONLY TO REVEAL WHAT BORGIL HAD ALREADY ENCOUNTERED.

BY AHRIMAN'S IMPS! HOLD, BORGIL! I'LL CUT IT—

NO! BEHIND YOU, LAD! LOOK!

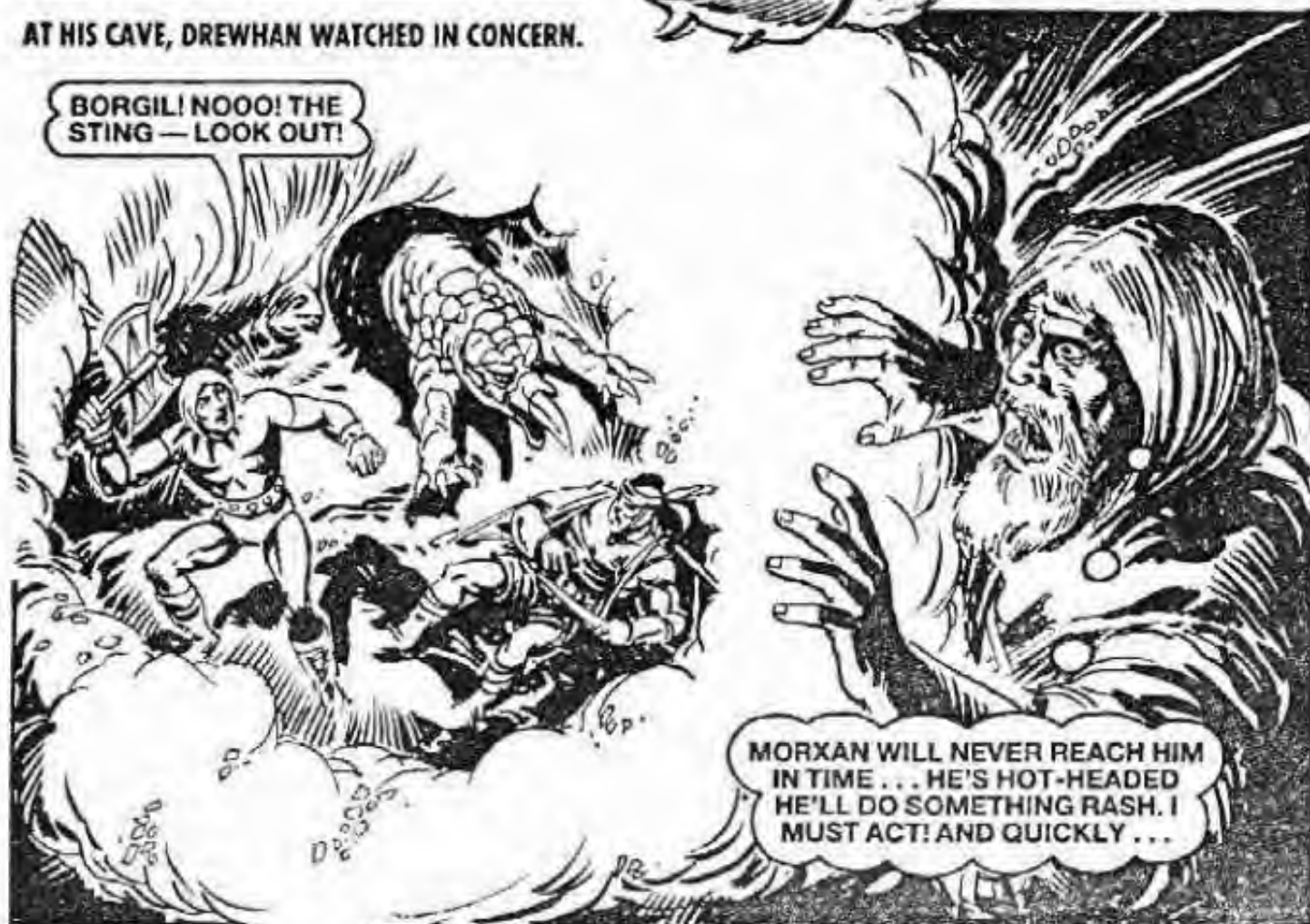






AT HIS CAVE, DREWHAN WATCHED IN CONCERN.

BORGIL! NOOO! THE STING — LOOK OUT!



DREWHAN'S ANCIENT SKILLS CAME FLOODING BACK—



WHAT IN THE—?

BY TETHYS! TIS DREWHAN'S
FIRE! THE OLD WIZARD IS
HELPING US.

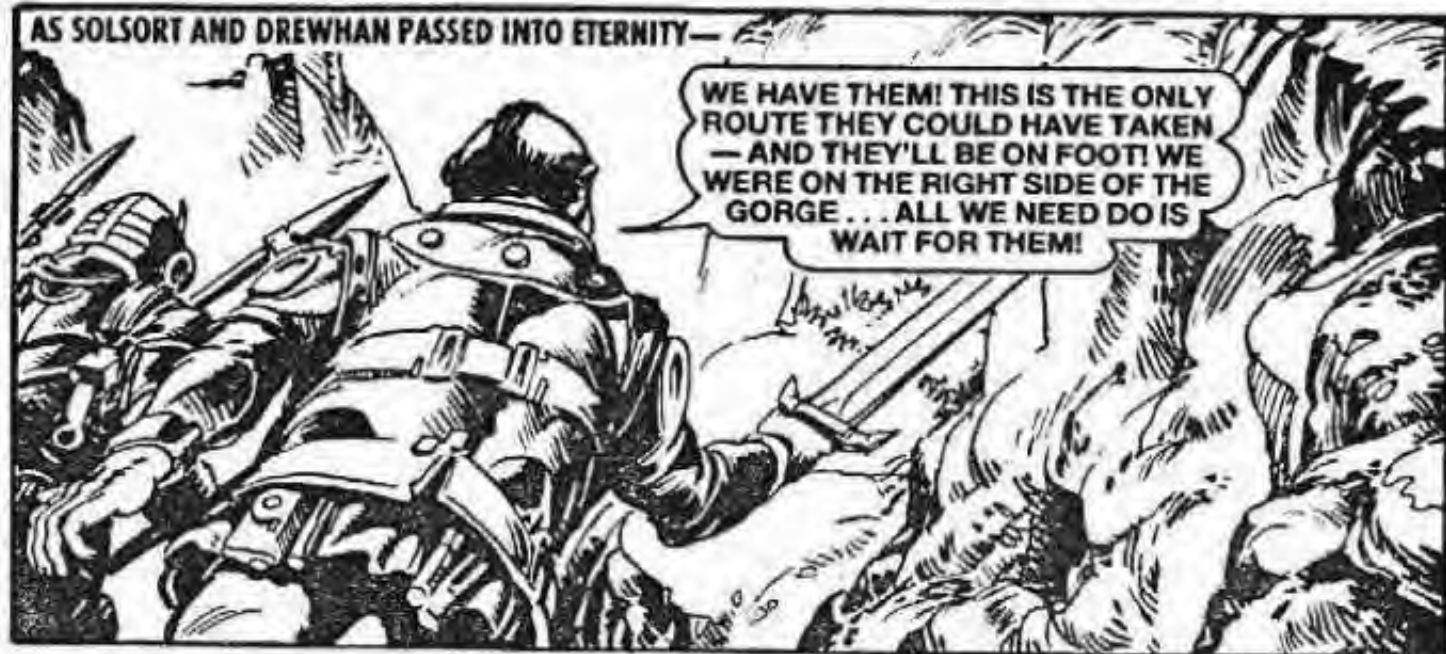
SINGED, BUT SAFE, BORGIL
TORE HIMSELF FREE OF THE
SHRIVELLED WEB, BUT
SOLSORT WAS NOW IN A
FURY...

THE OLD ADDLE-HEAD
SEEMS TO BE BACK ON
FORM, LAD. LET'S MOVE
ON...

THAT INTERFERING TOAD!
PERHAPS I SHOULD TURN MY
ATTENTION TO DREWHAN
HIMSELF... REMOVE HIM ONCE
AND FOR ALL... YES! IF HE
DESIRES A DUEL, THEN LET HIM
HAVE ONE — TO THE DEATH!



AS SOLSORT AND DREWHAH PASSED INTO ETERNITY—



WE HAVE THEM! THIS IS THE ONLY ROUTE THEY COULD HAVE TAKEN — AND THEY'LL BE ON FOOT! WE WERE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE GORGE . . . ALL WE NEED DO IS WAIT FOR THEM!

BUT KROLAN HAD FORGOTTEN ONE THING — THE HILLS WERE ALIVE WITH REBEL FORCES, AND, AS MORXAN AND BORGIL APPEARED—




THERE!
AT THEM!

BY TELLUS!
KROLAN!

BUT LOOK, LAD. REBELS! AND
A LOT OF THEM ARE NIRAQIS!


DON'T LET THEM SEE
MORXAN AND HIS AXE!
THEY MUST NOT KNOW
ABOUT THIS 'CHOSEN
ONE'.




HE MUST HAVE EVERY ONE OF HIS CRACK TROOPS WITH HIM! WE'VE AN IMPOSSIBLE FIGHT, BORGIL, BUT WE'LL TAKE ALL WE CAN!

AYE, LAD! AND HE'S DELIBERATELY KEEPING US APART FROM THE REBELS — THE MOMENT THEY SEE YOU WITH THAT AXE THEY'LL KNOW! IT'LL BE JUST THE BOOST TO THEIR MORALE THAT KROLAN DREADS!

THEN, AS MORXAN FOUGHT ON, SWINGING THE HUGE DOUBLE-BLADED SWORD IN AN ARC OF FIRE, A STRANGE HIGH-PITCHED HUMMING SEEMED TO FILL THE AIR, DROWNING EVEN THE SCREAMS OF THE DYING ...



BORGIL! LISTEN, MAN! THE AXE—



LISTEN! WHAT THE —? LOOK! THE AXE! IT'S HIM! THE LEADER!

THEY'VE SEEN HIM! ALL IS LOST ... THEY'LL FIGHT LIKE THE ANIMALS THEY ARE, NOW ...

A SENSE OF DESTINY SURGED THROUGH THE RAGGED BAND. KROLAN MADE HIS CHOICE...

I MUST REACH THE PALACE AND ALERT THE MEN WE HAVE LEFT — WE'VE AN UPRISING ON OUR HANDS!



KROLAN! THE COWARDLY DOG RUNS, BORGIL! AND THERE'S ONLY ONE THING THAT'LL STOP HIM — SEEING ME WITHOUT THIS! HOLD IT FOR ME, MY FRIEND!

WHAT —? BUT — ARE YOU CRAZY?



HOLD, KROLAN! LOOK, YOU GUTLESS RABBIT — NO AXE!

WHAT IN THE NAME OF—?



SOLSORT SAID ONLY I COULD
ALTER WHAT IS WRITTEN —
ONLY I COULD KILL HIM . . . AND
WITHOUT THAT AXE . . .



COME ON, LAD . . . YOU
MADE A TERRIBLE
MISTAKE LAYING DOWN
THAT DOUBLE-HEADED
AXE! WITHOUT IT YOU
ARE JUST NOT BIG
ENOUGH!



BUT MORXAN HAD SPENT
HIS LIFE WITH TRAVELLING
PLAYERS AND KNEW WHAT
HE WAS DOING AS HE
JUMPED.



DIE, YOU
— WHAT—!!

HE TORE THE SWORD FROM KROLAN—



YOU DIE!

KROLAN'S DYING SCREAM ECHOED THROUGHOUT THE AREA. THERE WAS A SUDDEN, STUNNED SILENCE...



TARSILIA HAD TAKEN ITS FIRST UNSTEADY STEPS TO FREEDOM UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MORXAN, THE CHOSEN ONE. IT WAS UP TO HIM TO LEAD TARSILIA INTO A NEW GOLDEN AGE.



STAY WITHIN REACH, BORGIL, YOU GREAT NIRAQI OX. I SEEM TO REMEMBER THAT WE HAVE A LITTLE PERSONAL FIGHT TO FINISH...

AFTER YOU, LEADER. I AM HONOURED TO FIGHT BY YOUR SIDE.

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Tarsilia, a country in the Earth of prehistory, was ruled by the murderous hand of Krolan the Overlord. Any who showed resistance were killed. But The Legend said that "a chosen one" would lead the people to victory. It also said that he would be armed with an axe that sang, and gleamed brightly even on the darkest night.

